



## **CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY**

The purpose of the Certificate of Occupancy (C of O) is to ensure that the use of a building, structure or land in the District of Columbia is compatible with the general intent of the Zoning Regulations and the provisions of the DC Building Codes. Consequently, no person can use a structure or land in the District of Columbia for any purpose other than a single-family dwelling until a Certificate of Occupancy has been issued for that structure. The fee is based on square-footage. A new Certificate of Occupancy is required when:

- A property has a change of ownership
- A property has a change in occupancy load
- A property has a change in use

A Certificate of Occupancy is not required when:

- A business is conducted in a commercial building that already has a general C of O
- It is for a separate apartment in an apartment building for which a general C of O has been issued.

All Certificates of Occupancy must be prominently posted and visible to those entering the premises, with the exception of churches.

If a use is proposed that does not meet the zoning requirements for a particular location, an application for a special exception or variance may be filed with the Board of Zoning Adjustment. Information regarding the zoning and acceptable uses for any location in the District of Columbia is available on the Internet at [www.dcoz.dc.gov](http://www.dcoz.dc.gov), or by calling the Office of Zoning at 727-6311.

## **HOME OCCUPATION PERMIT**

The purpose of the Home Occupation Permit (HOP) is to allow an individual to conduct certain occupations in his or her principal residence, while at the same time protecting residential neighborhoods from possible adverse effects of such occupations. Title 11, Section 203 (Home Occupation), of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations states that no person shall conduct a home occupation without a Home Occupation Permit. The one-time fee for the HOP is \$50.

A home occupation is a business, profession or other economic activity that is conducted full- or part-time in the principal residence of the person conducting the business. Examples of allowable uses as home occupations are general office use, tutoring of no more than five students at one time, sewing, fine arts activities, computer programming, cosmetologists and hair care providers, physicians and other licensed health care professionals.

Following are some basic conditions for a home occupation permit:

- No more than the larger of 25% of the floor area of the dwelling, or 250 square feet, can be used in the home occupation.
- No more than one person who is not a resident of the dwelling can be employed in the home occupation.
- No structural alterations to the interior of the dwelling are permitted for the occupation, if they would make it difficult to return the dwelling to exclusive residential use.
- No more than two vehicles can be used in the practice of the home occupation, and no more than 8 trips to the premises daily by visitors, customers and delivery persons are permitted. No more than 8 clients can be on the premises in any one-hour period. No parking or storage of commercial vehicles is permitted.
- One exterior sign, unlit and flush-mounted, of no more than 144 sq. in. is permitted.
- Any activity involving commercial food preparation is not considered a home occupation

A Bed and Breakfast facility is considered a home occupation, provided that the use is in a single-family building, breakfast is the only meal served, and, with some conditions, that there are no more than two sleeping rooms. Additional requirements apply if the dwelling is in a historic district.

Generally, an application for a Home Occupation Permit is carefully reviewed by staff in the Zoning Division to determine whether the type of business activity will have an adverse impact on the surrounding neighborhood, and if physical or structural changes and additions are required. For example, a physician's office may require off-street parking, which would require a separate permit.

Recognizing that many home-based businesses are only engaged in "office type" work, the department has developed an Expedited Application for a Home Occupation Permit. This application can be used if the business owner can certify that the business complies with the following conditions:

### **Conditions for Expedited Home Occupation Permit Application**

1. The home occupation is located in my primary residence.
2. No more than the larger of 25% of the floor area of the home or 250 sq. ft. will be used for the home occupation. 60% of floor area may be allowed for a home artist studio.
3. The operation of my business does not produce a level of noise that exceeds the level that is normally associated with a residential area or the District's noise regulations.
4. No more than one person who is not a resident of the home will be engaged or employed in my home.
5. No structural alterations are required or planned in order to conduct my business from my home that would make it difficult to return the home to residential use.
6. The business does not create visual or audible electrical interference in television or radio receivers outside of the home, nor does it produce noxious odors, vibrations, glare or fumes outside of the home.
7. No vehicular trips by customers are made to my home.
8. Operation of my business does not require the parking and storage of commercial vehicles.
9. No direct sale of products will be made from my home except by telephone.
10. I understand that only one sign is permitted which may not exceed one sq. ft., must be flush-mounted and may not be illuminated.
11. My profession is not licensed by the Department of Health.
12. No services for children such as tutoring or childcare are provided in my home.